



KEEP THE PROMISE COALITION
Community Solutions, Not Institutions!

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Testimony before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 8, 2011
In Favor of Proposed SB 308

Good morning/afternoon Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. My name is Cheri Bragg, Coordinator of the Keep the Promise Coalition, a statewide mental health advocacy Coalition dedicated to ensuring that a comprehensive, community mental health system is created and sustained in Connecticut.

The Coalition is in favor of Proposed SB 308 entitled "An Act Concerning Community Based Health Services." This bill will require the Insurance Commissioner to explore an incentive-based system to expand private insurance coverage of community-based health services for developmentally disabled children. The Coalition feels this bill should be expanded to include all home and community-based health care options.

Children with mental health needs are not effectively served through private health insurance coverage. Many children cannot access the critical care they need. Community-based care and mental health care is not only cost-effective, it is care in the least restrictive setting. It also gives families the opportunity to be served in their own homes and communities where access to a natural support system is often greatest.

In addition, private healthcare often restricts access to needed inpatient services. In response, families desperately seeking this level of healthcare must often pay out-of-pocket, resulting in bankruptcy or severe financial hardship, or shift costs to the state through voluntary services. It is cost-effective for families to receive timely care when needed including preventative and early-intervention mental health care.

This Coalition was formed in response to the failure of the state to keep its promise to form a comprehensive, community mental health service system for adults after the closure of two of the large state psychiatric hospitals. As a result, many adults ended up homeless, in nursing facilities, or even in the criminal justice system. We must not continue to fail our children and families with behavioral health needs. Increasing this bill to include home and community-based mental health care options is cost-effective and right for children and families. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.